



Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

May 14, 2003

Mr. Robert A. Robinson
Managing Director, Natural Resources
and Environment
United States General Accounting Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Robinson:

I was disturbed to see news accounts of the General Accounting Office (GAO) report on the Department of Energy's (DOE) efforts to recover and secure radioactive sources which did not take into account significant actions taken by the Department and other concerns DOE raised regarding your draft report.

First and most important, your final report does not adequately reflect the major interagency initiative between the DOE and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to aggressively reduce risks posed by radioactive sealed sources. Therefore, DOE and NRC have decided to release the report to the public today, and I would urge you to review the enclosed copy.

Second, I am especially disturbed in that your staff met with me only after they had drafted their report, having failed to interview any policy executives within DOE during the report's preparation. I note that your final report simply summarizes and dismisses the concerns I raised with you.

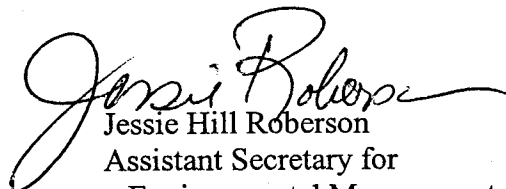
Lastly, I am also concerned that your report did not reflect my commitment that DOE has funded and will continue to fully fund recovery of sources, consistent with the priorities determined by the NRC. It is regrettable that my statement on full funding of the source recovery program did not carry more weight than that of the "unnamed official" that you quoted in your report.

The DOE will continue to fulfill its obligations to responsibly recover radioactive sealed sources identified by the NRC, to provide a higher level of protection for radioactive materials that pose a risk for use in a "dirty bomb." It is unfortunate that you chose not to provide policymakers with the complete report of DOE's efforts to safely recover and manage these materials.



If you have any further questions, please call me at (202) 586-7709, or Ms. Patrice M. Bubar, Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Integration and Disposition, at (202) 586-5151.

Sincerely,



Jessie Hill Roberson
Assistant Secretary for
Environmental Management